

RDX's COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE APPROACH

by Chris Foot

The database engine plays a strategic role in most organizations. It provides the mechanism to store physical data along with business rules and executable business logic. The database's area of influence has expanded to a point where it has become the heart of the modern IT infrastructure. Because of their importance, enterprises expect their databases to be reliable, secure and available.

Rapid advances in database technology combined with relatively high database licensing and support costs compel IT executives to ensure that their organization fully utilizes the database product's entire feature set. The more solutions the database inherently provides, the more cost effective it becomes. These integrated features allow technicians to solve business problems without the additional costs of writing custom code and/or integrating multiple vendor solutions.

The issue then becomes one of database complexity. As database vendors incorporate new features into the database, the more complex it becomes to administer. Modern database administrators require a high-level of training to be able to effectively administer the environments they support. Without adequate training, problems are commonplace, availability suffers, and the database's inherent features are not fully utilized.

Introducing Remote DBA Experts' Collective Knowledge Approach

Successful database administration units understand that providing better support to their customers not only comes from advances in technology but also from innovations in human behavior. The selection of support-related technologies is important, but it is the effective implementation and administration of those technologies that is critical to organizational success. Remote DBA Experts dedicates key personnel to become responsible for monitoring and evaluating its operational efficiencies.

This includes day-to-day support practices, monitoring and page reduction, customer documentation, etc. One of the innovative outcomes created by this commitment to quality is Remote DBA Experts' approach to database administration.

Remote DBA Experts' clients are not buying the services of a single database administrator. They are buying the collective knowledge of an entire staff of expert professionals. This robust solution allows clients to leverage the expertise of dozens of technicians at a cost less than traditional in-house consultants or full time employees.

Benefit	Median Amount	% of Total
Base Salary	\$83,927	70.0%
Bonuses	\$2,344	2.0%
Social Security	\$6,600	5.5%
401k / 403b	\$5,349	4.5%
Disability	\$1,380	1.2%
Healthcare	\$5,328	4.4%
Pension	\$3,623	3.0%
Time Off	\$11,282	9.4%
Total	\$119,833	100%

Source: HR Reported data as of December, 2008

When companies hire a full-time DBA, they pay salary, benefits and 401K packages. They also pay for sick days, holidays and training days. On average, it costs companies almost \$120,000 a year to hire and retain a single in-house DBA. With Remote DBA Experts, clients receive 24 x 7 support from an entire team of dedicated technicians at a fraction of the cost.

World Class Day-to-Day Administration Provided by Expert DBAs

Remote DBA Experts organizes the administrative support infrastructure into Primary and Secondary DBAs, Subject Matter Experts, and quality control/improvement specialists. Primary and secondary DBAs are responsible for learning everything that Remote DBA Experts need to know to provide high-quality customer support. They are the "owners" of that account and become responsible for the customer's happiness. Recent survey responses from Remote DBA Experts reinforce the importance of this "personal relationship". Primary and secondary DBAs know customer contacts on a first-name basis, know their backgrounds, and what they expect from a service provider.

They are also responsible for learning the customer's toolsets, overall support and change-management strategies, best practices, and day-to-day support requirements. All of this information is documented by the primary and secondary DBAs in customer-specific support portal documents. The primary and secondary DBAs are also responsible for educating their fellow technicians about their customer's environment. Lastly, they leverage the Subject Matter Experts to ensure that each customer benefits from a best-of-breed expert for problem solving and complex task resolution.

Increasing the Efficiency of Support – Subject Matter Experts

The database environment has become so complex that it precludes database administrators from becoming experts in all facets of database technology. Remote DBA Experts' large administrative staff allows it to increase efficiency by creating specialists in key database disciplines. In addition to expertise in providing day-to-day support, each of Remote DBA Experts' support staff members is required to become an expert in one or more database disciplines including backup and recovery, highly available architectures, SQL tuning, database performance, database monitoring, UNIX/Windows scripting, and database security. Remote DBA Experts allocates the support person with the highest-level skill sets in that particular task to provide the service requested by the customer. This methodology ensures that the customer gets the most experienced person available to perform complex tasks.

Reducing Downtime Duration by Faster Problem Resolution

This large staff also reduces the amount of time spent on troubleshooting and problem solving. Remote DBA Experts is able to leverage the expertise of a very large staff of database administrators. The support staff averages 10+ years of experience and consists of certified DBAs, Oracle Aces, and ex IBM, Oracle, and Microsoft support technicians. Remote DBA Experts is able to leverage the team's expertise to provide faster resolution to database performance issues and outages. Since the support staff works with many different companies, they have seen a number of different approaches to most situations.

99% of the support technicians work at the same physical site. This allows Remote DBA Experts to create a "war room" strategy for brainstorming activities and problem solving. All technicians needed to create a solution or solve a problem are quickly brought to bear when the need arises. Support technicians come from varied backgrounds, have many different skill sets and Remote DBA Experts is able to leverage these skills without having to search for the right person or wait for a return call. Work can take place immediately.

Quality Control/Improvement Specialist

Remote DBA Experts' quality control/improvement subject matter expert is responsible for monitoring and evaluating operational efficiencies. This includes day-to-day support practices, monitoring and page reduction, customer documentation, etc. The quality control technician is also responsible for quality improvement projects including the "Show Extra Value" and "Continuous Process Improvement".

The "Show Extra Value" program is intended to integrate an "exceed expectations" mindset into Remote DBA Experts' corporate philosophy. Brainstorming sessions are held on a regular basis with all personnel to discuss activities that go above and beyond the expected service levels.

The Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) ranks the most challenging and complex processes that Remote DBA Experts' personnel perform on a regular basis. Each business process is analyzed and "systemized" by a core team of technicians. CMM and ITIL compliant procedural documentation is created to streamline and improve the quality of the process under review. Checklists, sign-off, and best practice documents are created. Once the systemization is complete, the business process is assigned to a process owner who then becomes totally responsible for its Continuous Process Improvement.

Conclusion

Corporate information technology executives understand that their success relies upon their ability to cut costs and improve efficiency. Decreasing profit margins and increased competition in their market segment force them to continuously search for creative new solutions to reduce the cost of the service they provide. They also realize that this reduction in cost must not come at the expense of the quality of services their organization delivers.

Remote DBA Experts invites you to compare the benefits of our organizational architecture and quality improvement initiatives to our competitors, in-house personnel or on-site consultants. We firmly believe that our Collective Knowledge support model allows us to provide world class support.